

Patriarchy as a Divisadero: Women's Divided and Contradictory Experiences of
Embodiment

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ABSTRACT

This research project explores women's experiences of embodiment within a patriarchal society. A multi-theoretical approach is adopted in order to capture the complexities of embodiment. Understandings of the phenomenological 'lived body' are interwoven with understandings of the post-structuralist 'inscribed body' to address the dialectical relationship between subjective and objective constructions of the body. Eleven open-ended in-depth interviews were conducted drawing on visual aids, memory-work and 'body history' methods. The interviews were analysed using narrative analysis and discourse analysis. Analysis reveals how the body is involved in the intricate negotiation of subjectivity and agency through moments of collusion with and resistance of patriarchy. Furthermore, sensuous, empowering experiences of physicality are shown to be emancipatory in a society that usurps women's bodies, alienating them from their own embodiment.

Key words: women's embodiment, feminism, post-structuralism, phenomenology, alienation

This paper delves into the unexplored complexities of embodiment and gender. This area has been largely ignored in the discipline of psychology which continues to reproduce modernity's prioritisation of mind over body. In-depth qualitative research was conducted on women's stories of their bodies. Research was carried out from a feminist standpoint that assumes that patriarchy works in South African society as a structure and discourse with causal powers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Modern Western thought is characterised by its construction of false dualisms and binary opposites (Foster, 2004). The binary pairs do not comprise mutually constitutive/dialectical relationships but rather involve a hierarchy in which one term operates as the 'master signifier' and receives its value only because of the other's devaluation (Nayak & Kehily, 2006; Shefer, 2004). A pivotal dualism of modernity is the split between the mind and body. This is epitomised and cemented in the work of Descartes who reached the conclusion that "*I am, I exist*, is necessarily true, every time I express it or conceive of it in my mind" (1968, p. 103, italics in original). Thus human existence is assured through thought and not through concrete embodiment. Throughout modernity the mind has been prioritised and granted greater causal power than the body, with the body conceptualised as a mere holding cell for the mind (Crossley, 2001).

Recent theory on the body¹ and feminist theory problematises the above dictum, demonstrating that the concept of embodiment can be a powerful tool in explaining both subjectivity and social structures. Grosz (1994, p. ix) proposes a "refiguring of the body so that it moves from the periphery to the centre of analysis, so that it can now be understood as the very 'stuff' of subjectivity". The body presents a way of understanding how people live out the constraints and enablers of the social structures in which they are positioned, thus allowing an analysis of the interplay between structure and agency (Bryant & Hoon, 2006; Young, 2005). In this paper I draw on Grosz's analogy of the body as a Mobius strip that demonstrates the interrelationship between the interior and exterior, their inseparability, movement and the causality of both as they turn over and weave into each other. Grosz examines the ways in which corporeal existence is socially inscribed and in turn produces subjectivity – the

‘inscribed body’ and in juxtaposition, the ways in which a subject’s bodily exterior is lived from the inside and internally constituted – the ‘lived body’.

The Post-Structuralist Inscribed Body

A trajectory of philosophical thought from Nietzsche, to Kafka, to Foucault conceptualises the body as a surface upon which dominant ideologies² and power relations are inscribed and marked (Grosz, 1994). Grosz (p. 137) states that the “processes of body inscription must be understood as literal and constitutive” of subjectivity. Foucault (1976; 1977) argues that modern society is characterised by the regulation of time, space and bodies in daily life. The ‘docile body’ is constituted by the institutional practices of the school, the military and the family that discipline and regulate the arrangement and micro-movements of bodies. Bodies are normalised and altered through subjection to dominant institutional discourses and practices. Thus power works through and on the surface of the body, carving out particular bodies. Therefore in opposition to biologist or essentialist epistemologies, the body is understood as a socio-cultural form.

Foucault’s work has been criticised for assuming a neutral, blank body as an inscriptive surface and for ignoring differential gendered experiences of inscription and differential disciplinary techniques (Balbus, 1986; Grosz, 1994). A number of feminist theorists (see for example Bartky, 1990; Bordo, 1985, 1989, 1993; Brownmiller, 1984; Butler, 1990, 1993; Weedon, 1997) build on Foucault, but interrogate the gendered disciplinary inscriptions of the body – the body becomes gendered through hegemonic social discourses and practices. The female body becomes a ‘docile’, ‘disciplined’ body through constant regulation and normative practices. Thus only bodies that comply with hegemonic discourses are recognised as legitimate (Butler, 1993).

Throughout recorded history, women’s bodies have been altered in ways that serve men through practices of deliberate and overt constriction, for example foot binding (Brownmiller, 1984). Ideals of beauty have restricted women’s movements, leaving them vulnerable and thus reproducing men’s position of domination and power. Not only do women’s inscribed bodies reproduce unequal power relations but moreover result in a subjectivity characterised by feelings of deficiency, inadequacy and lacking

a sense of agency (Bartky, 1990; Brownmiller, 1984). Bartky (1990, p. 74) states that “women’s body language speaks eloquently, though silently, of her subordinate status in a hierarchy of gender”. Therefore it is argued that dominant forms of feminine inscription of the body have oppressive consequences for women.

Recent empirical studies demonstrating the gendered inscription of bodies include those of Martin (1998), Wright (1996), Reay (2001) and Gordon (2006). These studies analysed processes of becoming gendered through practices at preschools and schools using methods ranging from observational studies to open-ended interviews. Across the board results show that disciplinary discourses and practices in education produce gendered bodies with unequal (oppressive) constraints. For example Wright’s study of physical education classes in which 49 female and 32 male students between the ages of 13 and 17 were interviewed, demonstrated that girls and boys were constructed as binary opposites. Consistent with hegemonic discourses, boys were defined as strong, tough, powerful and independent whereas as girls were taught to behave like “young ladies”, which resulted in a sense of fragility and hesitant motility. Gordon’s ethnographic, longitudinal study of over 50 post-16-year old male and female school children showed that teachers were less likely to encourage girls to play sport³ and move freely in space. Martin’s observational study of 112 children of 3 to 5 years in preschools indicated that teachers’ encouragement of girls’ adornment of their bodies resulted in a restriction of girls’ bodily movements and encouraged them to take up less space with their bodies. All the studies indicated that there were sanctions and punishments for transgressing gendered norms. For example girls were punished for relaxed comportment, their heterosexuality was questioned and they were perceived as less attractive by male peers. Thus through oppressive bodily inscriptions, “girls learn that their bodies are supposed to be quiet, small, and physically constrained” (Martin, 1998, p. 504).

The Phenomenological Lived Body

Phenomenology, which is grounded in the lived experience of subjects, is recognized as an important explanatory tool for subjective embodiment. Merleau-Ponty (1962) is influenced Marx’s point of departure which is “real man (sic) of flesh and blood, standing on the solid round earth and breathing in and out all the powers of nature” (McLellan, 1971, p. 27). Merleau-Ponty thus rejects Cartesian dualism by arguing that

humans are fundamentally embodied beings and cannot be removed from concrete existence. Humans do not understand their bodies as if they were external objects but rather as ‘embodied intentionality’. Thus a practical, bodily, pre-reflective way of being is the primary way of being-in-the-world and provides a particular point of view that cannot be transcended. From this perspective, the mind is not bestowed with greater causal powers than the body because the body actively engages with other subjects and objects to create meaning of one’s situation in the world (Burkitt, 1999; Crossley, 2001; Grosz, 1994; Langer, 1989).

Simone de Beauvoir (1989), the mother of modern feminism, builds on Merleau-Ponty, arguing that “the body is not a *thing*, it is a situation ... it is the instrument of our grasp upon the world” (p. 35). Thus, she too views the body not as an object but as providing us with a perspective in the world, a situation. However, under patriarchy,⁴ women’s bodies are positioned as objects for men, experienced as lacking and as an Other. In patriarchal societies, women’s bodies are experienced as weaker than and less competent than men’s – they lack instrumentality and fail to have powerful causal effects on objects in the world. Thus men and women experience different situations – a woman’s being one of greater constraint and alienation.

Iris Marion Young (2005) draws on Merleau-Ponty and de Beauvoir to continue the project of theorising women’s embodiment and experience of their bodies from a phenomenological perspective. Young claims that “there is a particular style of bodily comportment that is typical of feminine existence and this style consists of particular modalities of the structures and conditions of the body’s existence in the world” (p. 31). Critical to Young’s argument is the understanding that women live and experience their bodies as both subject and object. Women experience themselves as subjects and simultaneously as ‘things’ for the consumption of the male gaze. Young states that “feminine existence experiences the body as a mere thing – a fragile thing, which must be picked up and coaxed into movement, a thing that exists as *looked at and acted upon*” (2005, p. 39, italics in original). Thus the body is experienced as something other or exterior to the self (Chadwick, 2007). This state of division has a number of consequences for the ways in which women live and experience their bodies in relation to the world. In a set of essays, Young explores this ambivalent and contradictory lived experience. For example in *Throwing Like a Girl*, she critiques

Merleau-Ponty's universal conception of motility, arguing that feminine motility is more restricted, involving 'ambiguous transcendence', 'inhibited intentionality' and 'discontinuous unity'. Feminine bodies do not make use of the full space available to them, are experienced as fragile and tend not to make use of all the parts of their bodies in tasks. Thus the full powers and potentials of the body remain unrealised. In a subsequent essay, *Breasted Experience*, Young explores embodiment from the woman's perspective. She suggests possible ways in which women might live their bodies as subjects, with an emphasis on the way the body feels, away from the male gaze.

Recent empirical studies focusing on specific areas of women's subjective experience of embodiment include that of Rice (2003), Budgeon (2003), Millstead and Frith (2003) and Earle (2003). Findings suggest that women experience contradictory feelings about their embodiment. For example, Millstead and Frith conducted in-depth interviews with eight women about their personal experiences of being large-breasted; they report that the women felt "angry", "sick inside", "upset" and "disrespect(ed)" because of the constant, invasive, male gaze that viewed their breasts as objects for male consumption (pp. 458 – 459). In addition Earle, who conducted 40 in-depth, unstructured interviews with 19 pregnant women, showed that women's embodiment was lived as object. Women continued to "subscribe to the view that they are ornamental and that they should conform to the contemporary ideal of slenderness, even during a time when corporeality dictates that this shall not be so" (p. 250). However, Millstead and Frith also found that large-breasted women expressed feelings of confidence, attractiveness and enjoyment of their shapely bodies. This research suggests that under patriarchy, women's embodiment is a contradictory and alienating experience.

RATIONALE

The journey through literature and research in the contested terrain of gender and the body reveal that the body and its dialectic relationship with social structure is an important site in researching subjectivity. The interweaving of both the inscribed and the lived body is necessary to capture the complexities of this story. The literature review indicates that there is a dearth of empirical work that attempts to capture this interwoven story. Thus in this paper I endeavour to stitch together these two

frameworks. Furthermore, the review suggests that the story of women's bodies in patriarchal societies is marred by contradiction, objectification and alienation. The fact that South Africa remains a deeply patriarchal society⁵ calls for research on South African women's experiences of their bodies in order to point to possibilities for the emancipation of women and the prevention of psychic alienation. Young (2005) imagines the possible experiences of women's bodies outside of patriarchal practices and discourses and phallogocentric representations. As Irigaray (1985, p. 214) states: "If we don't invent a language, if we don't find our body's language, it will have too few gestures to accompany our story." Thus research that prises open cracks for imaginings, that creates new stories from the echoes of women's silences is crucial for the project of feminism. No research in this area has investigated feminists' experiences of the body which may prove to be an untapped resource for crafting new discursive representations of women's embodiment. Therefore the focus of this research is to explore South African feminists' experiences of embodiment in order to understand how patriarchy works through embodiment and the resistances thereof.

METHOD

Participants

I used purposive sampling in order to obtain a sample of ten women (including myself). Participants ranged between the ages of 21 and 57, seven were "white", one was "black" and two were of "mixed race"⁶. I knew all participants prior to the research, most of whom were members of a social activism group to which I belong and/or fellow students and friends. The common thread linking the participants is that they are all familiar with feminist theory and most of them identified themselves as feminists.

Data Production

In this research project I aimed to capture the visceral, physicality of women's experiences of embodiment. However I am left with the distinct feeling that the materiality of bodies eluded me as obstacles to their tangibility were presented. I originally hoped to video record the interviews in order to grasp the movement of bodies and the interaction between bodies. However, this idea failed as participants felt uncomfortable in front of the camera, thus throwing up questions surrounding the politics of the invasive gaze in intimate moments. Subsequently, I turned to Haug's

(1987) collective memory work in which photographs were used to aid the memories of women when discussing their bodies and processes of becoming gendered and sexualised through the body. This approach proved slightly more successful, but some participants still felt uncomfortable or appropriate photographs were not available. Thus in some interviews photographs were used in a 'photo-elicitation' method to the trigger thoughts, memories, feelings and stories of participants (Collier, 2001).

I drew on a number of theoretical resources in the interview process. Firstly, as a researcher, I took an explicitly feminist stance which sought to problematise hierarchical power relations in the research process. For example I invited participants to ask me questions and told my own stories. My subjectivity thus flows through the research process. Identification with participants was important as it enabled the establishment of an inter-subjective relationship and provided a context that allowed participants' voices to be articulated and affirmed (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Secondly, I drew on a narrative framework for nine one-on-one interviews in which participants were given control in shaping the interview (Murray, 2003). Thus the interviews were open-ended so as to avoid stifling and curbing their stories (Hollway & Jefferson). Similar to a life history interview in which participants' stories and experiences are narrated through different life stages, I drew on Chadwick's (2007) body history method in order to outline possible questions in the interviews (see Appendix A). Thirdly, in two focus groups, I was influenced by the collective memory work of Haug (1987) and Davies et al. (Davies et al., 2006; Davies et al., 2001; Davies, Flemmen, Gannon, Laws, & Watson, 2002) and Gilles et al. (2004). In this work there is no distinction between the researcher and the researched and there is a focus on the memory of specific embodied moments. I focussed on two topics of experience (see Appendix B) in the focus groups and therefore the stories told were not individualised, atomistic ones, but wove together with other stories through shared experiences.

Procedure

I contacted the counselling services of Rape Crisis and Lifeline in order to obtain their assurance that participants could be referred if the interviews resulted in distress. I informed all participants of the purpose of the research and negotiated the method of research with them. I obtained informed consent (see Appendix C) as well as the

permission to record all interviews. I conducted nine one-on-one interviews and two focus groups. Thereafter, I invited participants to read and correct the transcriptions and to conduct their own analyses. I analysed the transcriptions using narrative and critical discourse analysis. Stories, patterns and discourses emerged that could be interpreted through the double lens of the theory set out in the literature review.

Data Analysis

I utilised two forms of analysis in my research: narrative analysis and critical discourse analysis. The following central features of narrative analysis informed my research. Firstly, an understanding of *gestalt* was utilised in order to capture the distinctive quality of the whole; lives were not understood as segmented, fragmented bits and pieces but rather as stories which attempt to make sense and meaning of our worlds (Bruner, 1991). Secondly, lives were understood to be lived temporally; a focus on ‘diachronicity’ results in a specific shape or plot line for our lives (Bruner). Thirdly, the central feature of narratives was understood to be complications or troubles (Bruner, Labov, 1972). Narratives are propelled by the contravention or troubling of cultural scripts and norms. Bruner (p. 16) states that “it is Trouble that provides the engine of drama”. Finally, narratives are never told in isolation, they are not only about a singular atomised self making her way through the world. Rather narratives were understood to be constructed in particular socio-cultural contexts and to draw on available social resources to make meaning (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). In constructing the presentation of the narratives, I was encouraged by the creative and experimental work of Chadwick (2001; 2007) to find new and more revealing ways of presenting the data.

Secondly, I utilised a Parkerian approach to discourse analysis in which language is understood as performative as opposed to descriptive (Austin, 1962). Furthermore, language is understood as an ideological tool; as Fairclough (1989, p. 5) states, critical discourse analysis aims “to show up connections which may be hidden from people such as the connections between language, power and ideology”. Thus the aim is to untangle language in order to expose the ways in which it serves to (re)produce, maintain or transform different ‘realities’ (Foster, Haupt, & de Beer, 2005). Examples of the techniques I employed include looking at contradictions, inconsistencies, binary oppositions, the ways in which subjects and objects are constructed and ideological

articulation. Parker's (1992) three auxiliary criteria: discourses support institutions; reproduce power relations; and have ideological effects, are crucial in understanding the reproduction or transformation of unequal social relations. Furthermore, the three auxiliary criteria indicate that discourses have real material effects and thus critical realism (as opposed to naïve realism) serves as the under-labourer for my analysis. In other words, discourse is not emphasised at the expense of material reality, resulting in "ludic theory" and a "rewriting of idealism" (Ebert, 2005, p. 45). This is consistent with research that focuses on the materiality of embodiment, the experience of this materiality and the ways in which ideology shapes how bodies are lived in the world; thereby holding together structure and subjectivity in a dialectic relationship.

ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION

Narrative Analysis: Embodiment as a Journey

The words of the participants are often shaped as stories: stories about one's own body, stories of the ways in which bodies feel in different spaces and stories of interacting, intertwining, relational bodies. The dominant narrative structure, drawn on by more than half of the women, was a narrative of progress and restoration of embodiment. A fairly carefree experience of embodiment is troubled and in some stories spirals down to a crisis point. Thereafter a journey of restoration is told.

Inter-corporeal Journeys

Crossley states that fundamentally "we are inter-subjects" (Crossley, 1996, p. 173), similarly we are inter-corporeal; bodies are relational and situational sites. Drawing on Beauvoir, Moi (1999, p. 65) argues that "The body is a situation and is placed within other situations". Thus importance is placed on the way that bodies interact within "the ensemble of social relations" (Marx, 1969).

Samantha⁷ and Rehana's stories are particularly brimming with relations with 'others', which partially define their experiences of embodiment. Samantha stated:

...I didn't know my body on my own, it needed interaction with somebody else for me to understand what my body was ...

Both narrate a trajectory of negative to positive bodily inter-relations. Samantha's first sexual experience was one of abuse leading to experiences of dirtiness:

...I was crying and just rinsed my mouth out like over and over again and was just like spitting and trying to get it out but I couldn't ...

Thereafter embodiment is partially defined by invasive sexual relations with male partners, indicating a loss of agency. She stated:

...they just wanted to have sex all the time and I just did not want to but I did anyway and that felt horrible ... I did feel totally invaded ...

The turning point in Rehana's story, the crisis moment that leads to transformation (Plummer, 1995), is one of her body being raped. The "extreme physical violation" resulted in a change in the way that she experienced her body:

... and then I just realised that I needed to learn to be in the world in a way that was constructive and like to like make peace with myself and my body ...

Thereafter her narrative is characterised by positive bodily interactions. Sex with her present female partner is narrated as:

... intoxicating ... it feels like a very creative and constructive and healing space and um a very nurturing space which is quite contrary to how it used to feel before ...

Similarly, Samantha's story is now painted with images of positive sexual relations:

... it's amazing ... it was just so wonderful ... I realised ooh this is how it's supposed to be ...

The use of spiritual moral language ("healing", "supposed to be") frames the stories of differing experiences of inter-corporeality as a journey that advocates a particular corporeal way of being (Frank, 1995). It advocates a rejection of invasive bodily relations with masculine 'others' and it re-presents and challenges patriarchal social relations.

Temporality and Stages in the Journey

Diachronicity is key to the narratives. Many of the experiences of embodiment changed at the onset of adolescence. Prior to adolescence Rehana described herself as:

... this little nymphette running around...

Similarly Maggie described the period as one in which she was:

... loving physical movement...

... exploring what my body could do ...

In addition, many stories of pre-adolescence were replete with narratives of resistance, refusal and rejection (Ochs & Capps, 1996). It is often a period of ‘troubling’ of the normative feminine social script (Bruner, 1991). Both Kirsten and Maggie described their young selves as “tomboys”; Maggie stated:

... I was one of the boys ...

Maggie also narrated tales of her rejection of femininity. She told of how she used to ‘wet her pants’ whenever her mother put her in frilly, restrictive clothing and of how she made herself a cardboard penis and rejected her feminine name. This rejection indicates that the masculine subject position was perceived as more desirable because of the limitations imposed upon a feminine body. Thus the troubling of the feminine script serves to disrupt the normative mapping of sex onto gender whilst simultaneously reproducing masculinity as the more powerful gender⁸.

Adolescence is a defining moment when, as Maggie stated:

... suddenly ... everything changed ...

Brown and Gilligan (1993, p. 4) describe adolescences as “a time of disconnection, sometimes of dissociation or repression in women’s lives”. Similarly Ussher (1989) describes adolescence as a time of splitting in which others are less tolerant of deviations in normative femininity. Kirsten told of how her body became a source of shame:

... I was embarrassed of what my body was doing and started becoming embarrassed of what my body looked like ...

Similarly Rehana was disapproving of the way her body was changing and said that she thought:

... if I can’t be a woman in the shape and form I want to be then I’d rather just not be ...

Maggie stated that from adolescence she:

... forced it into an idea that I have about what is an attractive female body ...

The militaristic verbs “punished” and “forced” suggests a process of becoming a ‘docile’, disciplined body (Foucault, 1977). The above comments tell a tale of how the subscription to a hegemonic femininity leads to a loss of relationship with bodies. Rehana stated:

... it was a loss not being able to just be free

The stories reinforce Brown and Gilligan's (1993) argument that an increasing alignment with social norms results in a loss of self. The adolescent body is revealed as site upon which relations of power play out and upon which patriarchal ideologies carve out a particular body and experience of embodiment, quashing earlier ways of being.

Subsequently, brushstrokes of agency, resistance and re-authoring (re)appear (Bruner, 1991) on the canvas leading to reconfigurations of the body and new understandings of embodiment. Once again the normative feminine script is 'troubled'. Rehana spoke of how:

... in so many ways I was just in recovery ...

Thus reiterating Brown and Gilligan's (1993) assertion that retrieval of the embodied self needs to take place. A process of restoration occurs through an acceptance of the body. Rehana said:

... I had to like accept this is my shape and my form and my materiality ...

Furthermore Rehana spoke of now being in a place in her journey in which she can:

... play in-between (genders) ...

Samantha spoke of feeling:

... really strong ... I like feeling strong, I'd like to feel strong a lot more ...

Thus she resisted the fragility and inactivity of the feminine social script (Brownmiller, 1984). The above statements draw on counter-narratives in order to paint a parody of and 'queer' the feminine identity script, subverting it, so as to construct a new subject position (Butler, 1993; Parker, 2005).

The following is a re-presentation of Maggie's journey (all phrases but the title are her own)⁹. The-representation reveals the mirroring of her experiences of embodiment (on the left) and her relationship to femininity (on the right). The re-presentation exposes the possible oppressive consequences of subscribing to a normative femininity (Bartky, 1990; Bordo, 1985, 1989, 1993; Brownmiller, 1984).

EMBODIMENT AS A REFLECTOR OF INSCRIPTIONS OF FEMININTY

Enjoying my body	I was an enthusiastic tomboy
Loving physical movement	I was one of the boys
Exploring what my body could do	Resisting becoming a woman

Suddenly
 Suddenly
 Everything changed

<p>My body as an object My body had to be a machine Haven't allowed <i>it</i> to be what <i>it</i> wants to be Very mean to my body Very hard on my body Punishing <i>it</i> Forcing <i>it</i> Pushing <i>it</i> Wanting my body to be</p> <p style="padding-left: 100px;">Hard Firm Empty</p> <p>Dear body I will love <i>you</i> <i>care for you</i> <i>accept you</i> <i>free you</i> from physical expectations</p>	<p>Shift in identity I didn't resist Started being conscious of the male gaze Idea of what a girl should look like, of what is an attractive female body Compulsion, Obsession to be a socially accepted body Burden to be sexually attractive</p> <p>I don't want to look sexually attractive I want to not look sexy I like to stick out a hairy leg</p>
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Rehana's journey of embodiment is articulated in poetic re-presentation (all phrases are her own) to recover the movement and rhythms of her narrative. Furthermore the poem serves to re-present her journey as a whole, without breaking it up into separate moments and accounts. This re-presentation tells a story of the journey from dissociation to presence in her body:

A STORY OF THE INARTICULABLE

I had a
 Dissociated,
 Troubled relationship *with* my body

Physicality seemed Messy
 Disgusting
 Revolting
 Betrayal

Always in pursuit of transcendence of this physicality
 Did not feel I was present *in* my body
 Battled being present *in* my body
 Looked down *at* myself
 Ran so much *from* myself
 Rather just not be

Non-being
 Disappearing
 Ghost

Silent
 Silent violation

My journey to embodiment
 Make peace with my body
 Heal self in relation to body

Sensuous
 Intoxicating
 Tantalising being human

I'm present *in* my body

Me *in* my body
 Here *in* my body

This *is* my body

I'm real

I have Shape

Form

Boundaries

I accept this *is* my Shape

my Form

my Materiality

These are the things I need to be human

This narrative analysis uncovers the complexities and movements of experiences of embodiment. It serves to highlight participants' journeys from a freer experience of embodiment to one of alienation and distance (and back again). This exposition is thus consistent with literature and research¹⁰ that suggest that women's bodies can be a source of alienation in oppressive social systems. However, their stories are not only tales of alienation and estrangement, they are also stories of active subjects attempting to weave the beginnings of an alternative tapestry. I now turn to an analysis of the particulars of the participants' stories of in order to further unpack the complexities and contradictions of women's embodiment.

Critical Discourse Analysis: Accounts of the Inscribed and Lived Body

Critical discourse analysis serves to unravel and expose the patriarchal discourses that are interwoven into and shape participants' experiences and representations of their bodies. The analysis follows the theoretical framework laid out in the literature review - exploring the different ways in which women's bodies are inscribed and lived.

Firstly, different modes of the inscription of normative femininity and the ways in which they reproduce femininity and in turn patriarchy are explored. Secondly, I disentangle experience of the lived body through the subheadings: the threat of the masculine, the uncontained body and the objectified body. Finally I explore possibilities for change under imaginings and contradictions of embodied subjectivity.

The (Harrowing) Inscription and Re-Production of Femininity

“The Harrow, a good name for it. The needles are set in like the teeth of a harrow and the whole thing works something like a harrow ... On the Bed here the condemned (wo)man is laid ... Whatever commandment the condemned (wo)man has disobeyed is written upon (her) body by the Harrow ... (S)he’ll learn it corporally, on (her) person ... The Harrow quivers, its points pierce the skin of the body ... anyone can look through the glass and watch the inscription taking form on the body” (Kafka, 1961, pp. 171-177).

Kafka’s metaphor serves to highlight the very material, visceral inscriptions of femininity that carve out particular types of bodies. I explore the apparatuses and practices of inscription of femininity that traverse from forced, compulsory bodily inscription to more subtle, clandestine operations, both serving to maintain and reproduce dualistic genders in which the masculine dominates over the feminine.

Women’s bodily hair proves to be a source of distress and a site upon which power works to alter the body. Forced inscription is exemplified in the account of Maggie’s first leg shaving experience in which she was carried to a bath and mandatorily shaven by senior schoolgirls. She stated:

... they pinned me down ... so they were compulsorily shaved (laughs),
shaved by force ...

Militaristic metaphors evoke images of a modern society that regulates and disciplines bodies through institutions such as schools, resulting in a normalisation of bodies (Foucault, 1977). The scene of compulsory shaving demonstrates that there are punitive consequences for failing to comply with dominant gendered norms resulting in “violent inscription” (Butler, 1990, p. xii); this finding is consistent with the studies by Gordon (2006), Martin (1998) and Wright (1996). The removal of hair constructs women’s bodies as smooth surfaces, much like vulnerable, infants bodies (Coward, 1984). Furthermore, participants described hair removal devices and practices as torturous. This is typified in the statements:

... it’s fuckn sore ...
... it was like a torture machine ...
... it’s like a torture device ...

Hair removal devices thus prove to be analogous to Kafka's punishment machine, revealing the inscription of femininity to be painful process (Fournier, 2002).

In addition to bodily hair, participants depicted women's clothing as a site of forced inscription through institutions such as the family and sport. Jackie stated:

... my parents started sanctioning what I could and couldn't wear and I, I remember ... my mom stopped buying me shorts ...

And Maggie complained:

... I hated being dressed up. I found those clothes very constricting ...

These findings are consistent with Martin's (1998) study in which teachers' adornment of girls' bodies served to restrict their movements. The excerpts support Brownmiller's (1984) argument that feminine clothing is hampering and impractical, serving to constrain expansive movement. She states that "the right to move freely had always been a dangerous and unfeminine issue" (p. 96). Revealing further sanctions on clothing, Jennie said:

... my mom I remember my mom would try to force me to wear bras ... she laid out a bra for me everyday ...

... I remember my instructors telling me I had to wear a sportsbra

Sexuality is thus contained, ordered and controlled by the forced encasing of women's breasts (Brownmiller, 1984).

The above accounts of the regulation and disciplining of women's bodies indicate a patriarchal carving out of 'docile' bodies (Foucault, 1977). Foucault (1976; 1977) argues that the nature of power has changed in modern society; power no longer operates through forced repression and coercion, but rather through the production of particular types of subjects. However, the above practices of inscription suggest that the direct sanction and regulation of women's bodies still occurs in modern society.

Althusser argues that subjection – in this case inscription – cannot be adequately grasped by the practices of coercion and force (Grosz, 1989). The invisible apparatuses of power mark the body through the internalisation of norms that prescribe a certain shape and size of body; thus the desire to be a certain way is the product of apparatuses of power (Bartky, 1990; Davies, 2000). The data showed that participants' aspirations to be a feminine body often resulted in feelings of deficiency

and inadequacy. The body was represented as a project to be worked on and maintained. This is exemplified in the statements:

... I remember looking at the photographs and being like really embarrassed about the photograph because my tummy was sticking out ...

... I was actually very proud, I thought I had a beautiful body ... I was often complimented ... I would spend hours in front of the mirror ...

The above comments illustrate the subjection to and acceptance of the feminine subject position in dominant discourse (as opposed to overtly forced inscription) which (re)presents the body in a particular way. Drawing on Gramsci's concept of hegemony (Holub, 1992), women 'consent' to the patriarchal feminine subject position or, as Althusser argues, women are interpellated or hailed into a particular subject position that is made readily available in patriarchal discourse and social relations (Parker, 1992).

Women are invested in particular subject positions due to the social endorsement received for their take-up and thus inscribed ways of being are reproduced (Hollway, 1998). For example Rachel said:

... of course because it (body) was ideal ... I had I had to watch my weight ... when I feel they're (her daughters) putting on too much weight I tell them start now rather ... it is a hell of a battle ... I could never eat as much as I want ... And I battled with that so I just think well, rather get used to that kind of discipline ...

Jackie supports this when she said:

... if I'm going to wear a skirt I'll make sure that I've shaven my legs um because people I know the perception of people who don't shave their legs as kind of you know 'lazy women', 'slothful' ...

The "lazy", "slothful" woman is positioned in opposition to the "discipline(d)", docile woman. The moral language used here indicates that patriarchal social norms are assimilated and used as a standard against which to judge women's bodies (Anderson & Jack, 1991). The use of the terms "of course" and "you know" appeal to a shared common sense understanding, or rhetorical 'topoi' serving to close off possibilities for alternatives (Billig, 2001). Thus the above accounts construct the fat and hairy woman's body as an immoral act in which one has let oneself go and lost control (Coward, 1984; Haug, 1987). The 'good' woman is the responsible woman who

maintains and regulates her body. The investment in the subject position of a self-disciplined woman reproduces the patriarchal image of women's bodies and serves to maintain unequal power relations.

The post-structuralist inscribed body is a body in process. It is becoming (verb) as opposed to a state/being (noun)¹¹ (Davies, 2000). The inscriptions of femininity are therefore processes by which the body changes. In laying bare the inscription of gender as a process, the (often invisible) natural or biological accounts of gender are problematised and unveiled as ideological mechanisms that reify gendered binary oppositions, transforming socio-cultural conditions into natural 'facts' (Eagleton, 1991; Moi, 1999). As Althusser, argues ideology has a material existence (Grosz, 1989); in this case women's bodies serve as a site for ideological struggle and inscription and re-inscription that in turn reproduces patriarchal social relations. I now shift the analysis of how bodies are lived in patriarchal societies and how experiences are imbued with patriarchal discourses.

The Masculine Threat: Safe Guarding the Boundaries

The conversations I had with many of the participants were overflowing with a construction of masculinity that reproduces the 'male sexual drive' discourse (Hollway, 1989, 1998). To list a few comments:

... The poor guy ... it must have been terrible for him ... he was so horny and so stimulated ...

... He was sex crazed ... really really really like what's the word (.) horny ...

... Sometimes I feel like the guy has more right to come than I do ...

Hollway (1989, 1998) identifies this discourse as constructing men as having an insatiable, out of control drive to have sex. In turn, women are constructed as the passive object of the male sex drive. Women spoke of 'he' desiring/wanting 'me', positioning their bodies as objects. Furthermore women understood their bodies as a means to an end, that of male sexual pleasure. For example Samantha said:

... in terms of the sex like it just felt like sometimes it just felt like he was there to do his thing and I didn't matter ...

The 'male sexual drive' discourse is complimented by the 'have/hold' discourse which centres around love, monogamy and the institution of the family (Hollway, 1989; 1998). For example Rachel stated:

... for me it was love and for him it was just sex ...

... women are definitely not polygamous ...

The last comment is a declarative, forceful truth claim that serves to construct women's sexuality in binary opposition to men's. The asexual woman is constructed as a natural opposition to the sexual man.

Entwined with discourses of the masculine sex-drive are representations of the experiences of violation and the ever present threat of violation. Brownmiller (1975) argues that rape¹² is the ultimate expression of patriarchy, perpetuating men's domination over women.

In the interviews, four women spoke of sexual abuse in the agentless, passive voice:

... I was sexually molested ...

... I was raped

... I was sexually abused ...

... It was actually abuse ...

The practice of rape keeps women in a state of fear because they live with the threat of bodily invasion (Brownmiller, 1975). De Beauvoir (1989) argues that the situation of women under patriarchy is frightening and menacing. This is exemplified in the words of Verona:

... If you don't set the boundary then you are open to exploitation ... if you're not setting that boundary then they will always try to get over it ...

... you can set boundaries and what most people, women don't do and girls don't do ... maybe they feel like they owe the guy something ... the minute you hesitate, you know, that's when he's like 'ok' he can push his luck ...

The image is one of women having to set up a barrier or boundary around themselves, inside which they can feel safe and free. This barrier inhibits women's movements and requires their constant vigilance and maintenance (Young, 2005). In this construction, the repetition of "if you don't", "if you're not" constructs danger as lurking just beyond the barrier. Furthermore the repetition of "you" places the responsibility on women to guard against invasion from men. The above discourses

reproduce patriarchal representations of sexuality, naturalising the passive/active binary and therefore men's sexual domination.

The Uncontained Body

In contrast to the 'docile' body, women often experience their bodies as erupting and disrupting. Kristeva argues that body is an anarchic source of energies, rhythms and drives that erupt out of their containment. The erupting body disrupts the norms of phallogentrism and logocentrism (Chadwick, 2007; Grosz, 1989). Rachel spoke of how birth was:

... so overwhelming ... you can't help but scream so I screamed AAAAH you know just like a primal scream. It's just incredible and then what I never forget is Dr ___ words 'Don't scream, it doesn't help and it upsets the other patients'
...

In this representation her body could not be contained and its energies needed release. These energies disrupted the phallogentric medical institution in which (male) doctors control the conduct of (female) patients. Furthermore, at this point in the interview her voice was overflowing with energy and verve, as she re-experienced the birthing moment.

Reinforcing this discourse of a disrupting body, Kirsten said:

... my body doesn't behave like it's supposed to sexually ... it doesn't fit into the normal feminine role sexually ... my body kind of misbehaves ...

She speaks of her body as something other than her – it is beyond her control.

Discourses of women's passive sexuality imbue her representation of her body, thus framing her own body as abnormal. However, her misbehaving body serves to disrupt phallogentric norms and resists patriarchal sexual relations.

Continuing to stitch together a discourse of the body as something 'other', women participants used the words on the left to describe their bodies. The words on the right are the suggested antonyms:

Icky	Pleasant
Disgusting	Appealing/Attractive
Dirty	Clean
Mushy	Firm

Leaky	Impermeable/Solid
Messy	Ordered
Loose	Tight
Flabby	Hard
Bulging	Contained
Weird	Normal

These implicit binaries illustrate that women often draw on patriarchal representations of their bodies, thus experiencing their bodies as abject. These discursive representations reproduce femininity as abject and other. Menstruation proves to be a significant source of abjection and embarrassment. For example Lucy and Verona stated:

... I was so scared I was going to leak ... I was always very worried ...
 ... You do anything to avert the embarrassment if you could because it is like
 the biggest embarrassment for a girl ... it's like your one big nightmare ...

Patriarchy works in conjunction with and is reinforced by logocentrism¹³ which prescribes a bounded, self-contained, unitary subject. Kristeva argues that the clean and proper body is the precondition of the subject. Thus hard, smooth, clean unchanging surfaces are assigned dominance over the messiness and fluidity of corporeality. Bodily fluids threaten the solidity and boundaries of this subject. As bodily fluids pass out of the body they are simultaneously rejected and owned as part of the body thus threatening the logic of non-contradiction. When logocentrism articulates with patriarchy, women's bodies are positioned as polluting and threatening to the construction of solid, self-identical subjects (Grosz, 1989, 1994). Furthermore, the excerpts illustrate that experience cannot be captured through the logocentric prioritisation of mind over body and thus support Grosz's (1994) assertion that the body provides a means of accessing subjectivity and social structure.

The Objectified Body

The body lived as an object is key in patching together an understanding of women's experiences of embodiment. De Beauvoir (1989, p. xlvi) states: "he sets himself up as the essential, as opposed to the other, the inessential, the object". To be objectified is to be reduced from the status of a person or subject to that of an object. One becomes

an object for a subject; a means to an end. Objects are passive and inert; they can be controlled and defined with properties that are quantifiable (Hollway, 1989; Young, 2005). Hegel (1998) argues that subjects require and come into being through reciprocal recognition and affirmation of subjecthood. In relations of unequal power, such as master-slave relations, there is an absence of recognition. The slave is reduced to 'objecthood', to a 'thing' in service of the will of the master (Bulhan, 1985).

Women's reduction to 'objecthood' is achieved through a number of mechanisms, predominantly through the 'look' or the 'gaze'. Western culture is obsessed with the visual which is not a neutral construction, rather it is controlled by men and reinforces relations of domination (Coward, 1984). Irigaray argues that sight is the most distancing sense, producing a clear divide between subject and object, thus the female body can be distanced and judged by its quantifiable surface properties (Young, 2005). Because women experience themselves as an object belonging to the desires and intentions of an other, the relation between the observer and the observed raises questions of ownership of the body (Bartky, 1990; Young, 2005). Sartre claims that the 'look' results in an experience of no longer belonging to oneself (Crossley, 1993). Drawing on Sartre, Grosz (1989, p. 7) states that "by means of the look, the other can steal away the subject's freedom to define itself and reduces it to an object". This experience is linked to patriarchal, capitalist social relations in which women's bodies are commodified and fetishized (Moody, 1994). Similarly Irigaray (1985) argues that in capitalist societies the public workforce is painted as masculine with women relegated to the status of object or commodities for masculine exchange and consumption on the market.

The loss of freedom and ownership of the body as well as its reduction to a passive object is typified in the following participants' comments¹⁴:

... The fact that I have a female body is like made, my body is taken and made into something ...

... The ownership of your body gets questioned, it's not clear who owns your body ...

... the whole thing of the gaze and when people look at you and look at parts of your body ... you feel like so violated ...

The last statement illustrates how the male gaze acts as a divisor, splitting women's bodies up into parts. This meaning is reinforced by the words of Verona and Jackie:

... my face must have been lost ...

... body parts which is all women are, at the end of the day, no one sees

women as a whole, they're not seen as a whole person ...

Bartky (1990) argues that sexual objectification reduces a person to separate parts against their will. Women experience themselves as divided bits and pieces that serve the needs of others.

Invariably, the patriarchal gaze is internalised, such that women become objects to themselves and act as their own divisor: "I myself become at once seer and seen, appraiser and thing appraised" (Bartky, 1990, p. 38). A distance is created between women's subjectivity and their own physicality such that they experience their bodies as inadequate and in need of shaping according to the standards of the 'fashion-beauty complex'. Rehana stated:

... I didn't feel like I was uh very very present in my body ...

... A lot of the time I would look down at myself ... it was easier to be away, not have to be in it ...

... you're not even allowed to be material ... I ran so much from myself ...

The phrases ("not ... in", "look down at", "ran ... from") indicate a distance from and discontinuity with her own materiality (Young, 2005). Thus a divided experience of embodiment is communicated. Along similar lines, Maggie said:

... I've punished it and haven't allowed it to be what it wants to be ...

She referred to her body as "it", drawing on patriarchal representations to define her body as an object. It is represented as something outside of herself that needs transformation and 'improvement' in order to satisfy the masculine gaze.

Further buttressing the understanding of the body as object, Kirsten stated:

... We have a more contained like sense of ourselves we have to like keep ourselves smaller ... we can't just go for the ball, we're all like precious ... I stop my body from doing things like I won't just slide into a ball or kick. It will be measured ...

This communicates Young's (2005) assertion that feminine motility is characterised by being both subject and object. 'Inhibited intentionality' is communicated through

the phrases “we can’t”, “I won’t” and “I stop”, indicating an uncertain motility and lack of trust in the body. ‘Ambiguous transcendence’ and ‘discontinuous unity’ are communicated through her broken, “measured” movement which prevents her full bodily capacities from being realised in the world.

The above excerpts illustrate how the patriarchal gaze acts as a divisor that fragments women’s bodies into parts, setting up a chasm between a disembodied, judging self and physicality. The body lived as an object results in alienation which entails the fragmentation or splintering of the subject and a prohibition on realising one’s full human potentials and powers (Bartky, 1990; Ollman, 1976). Fromm (1961, p. 37) states that alienation occurs when “(wo)man does not experience (her)self as the acting agent in (her) grasp of the world”. The literature and data suggest that under patriarchy, women’s situation disallows the full realisation of their bodily capacities and powers and that they are prohibited from full ownership of their bodies as well as ownership of the meanings assigned to their bodies. Young (1979) states that “The norms of femininity suppress the body potential as women. We grow up learning that the feminine body is soft, not muscular, passive, incapable, vulnerable ... Developing a sense of our bodies as beautiful objects to be gazed at and decorated requires suppressing a sense of our bodies as strong, active subjects moving out to meet the world’s risks” (as cited in Bartky, p. 35).

Imaginings: The Body as Subject and Gender as Zero

In the cracks and crevices of the women’s stories were moments in which the body was lived as a subject. As new subjectivities are spoken into existence (Davies, 2000), a counter-thread forms opening possibilities for imaginings that resist patriarchal representations. The lived body as subject is unalienated, indicating no fissure between self and body. Rehana and Samantha stated:

... I started doing yoga ... it would just be me in my body and the movement ... incredibly sensuous and healing just like to feel ...
 ... Running feels amazing because I feel really strong ... I feel in my body, I feel present ...

There is an emphasis on being “in” their bodies and on the way that their bodies “feel” to them. Reinforcing the importance of what the moving, sensuous body feels like in opposition to what the might look like are the following remarks:

... I found it (make-up) disgusting on my skin ... I could feel it like I could feel the weight of it on my skin and literally I just hated it ...

... I didn't wear a bra for a very long time because I didn't like the feel of it ... like even now I can feel it here. I think when I'm most comfortable I don't wear a bra ...

... I don't see myself, I don't see what I look like from the outside. Like I know how I feel and I know how my body feels to me and that feels fine. It's only when I look at myself in the mirrors that I can see it from the outside ... it's horrible ...

Irigaray argues that a woman-centred understanding of the body may pivot on touch rather than on sight. A movement away from the gaze allows for the energy and rhythms of the body to be ontologically prior to the body as a 'thing'. Thus the feeling and sensuousness of the body from the inside is prioritised over what the body looks like from the outside. For example, the bra constructs breasts into self-identical, solid 'things', pleasing to the male gaze (Young, 2005). However, as Lucy stated it does not *feel* comfortable. It functions as a barrier to touch and the possibility of caresses against clothing as well as preventing the movement of and the ever-changing form of breasts.

Continuing to weave together threads of new imaginings is the possibility of an imagined space where gender is not salient or where gender operates as zero (Weston, 2002). Three participants stated:

... I'm most comfortable in my body when ... it doesn't really matter that it's a female body ...

... it is awful that there's like this 'he' and 'she' ... I think the English language should be changed ...

... I think I'm trying to find like a different space, I don't want to be masculine and I don't want to be conventionally feminine, I want something other

Perhaps this "other" is gender as zero, a place where "gender momentarily slips away" (Weston, 2002, p. 33). Gender as zero is qualitatively distinct from gender as one, two, three, etc. Zero indicates an absence of 'thingness' (reification and objectification) where gender cannot be quantified, counted, measured or categorised. It opens up a space for new representations, for "changing the unthinkable" (Davies et

al., 2006, p. 90) where one's body and humanity are not defined and controlled by one's gender.

Contradictions, Paradoxes and Negotiations in Embodied Subjectivities

The participants' varying accounts of the body cannot be smoothly woven together to create a coherent tapestry. Rather they compose a patchwork riddled with loose ends and contradictory threads that do not tie up, as Havel states: "I exist ... as the tension between all my 'versions', for that tension, too (and perhaps that above all), is me" (as cited in Ochs & Capps, 1996, p. 29). In analysing, I am faced with an entanglement in which bodies reproduce patriarchy in one moment and attempt to bring about social transformation and the creation of new imaginings in the next.

The subject positions of being a (feminine) woman and a feminist were at times held together as "conflicting" and irreconcilable positions by participants. For example Jackie and Thembi stated:

... I don't really have a happy medium of marrying my leg-shaving self and my anti-James Bond self. I can't find one ...
 ... when I am feminine, I feel illegitimate as a feminist and when I'm a feminist I feel illegitimate as a feminine body so I have conflicting feelings ...

In other moments, participants expressed an acceptance of and justification for contradictory positions. For example Kirsten and Jenni said:

... I have to live this contradiction ... that's the thing with like you know shaving the legs ... and I will put lots of make up on and I know what that means and I know where it comes from and I know that these are the forces that are shaping my body ... Saying 'yes I know but I still like it so I'm going to do it anyway' (laughs) ... I think I'm very comfortable in contradiction ... I'm just a human being stumbling along and that's okay ...
 ... I'm a walking contradiction just like everyone else, my brain isn't supporting patriarchy but my body is ... 100% of the time it is ... I have urges to shave my head sometimes but then I'm just like long hair gives you so much power, how am I just going to give that up? ...

Even though both participants expressed an acceptance of contradiction on the surface, various rhetorical devices of justification indicate that this may not be such an

unproblematic position to be in. For example both appeal to the universal and the diminutive “just”. Jenni stated that she is “just like everyone else”, and Kirsten stated “I’m just a human being”. Rhetoric that appeals to the universal, serves to naturalise and present as inevitable particular ways of being. Responsibility for the possible reproduction of patriarchy is further reduced by the use of “just”. Moreover, Kirsten laughed directly after representing her contradictory position, suggesting possible uneasiness. The position of uneasiness in their role in the reproduction of unequal social relations suggests the acquisition of a reflexive stance in which criticism “make(s) harder those acts which are now too easy” (Davies et al., 2002, p. 312).

The analysis shows that accounts are imbued with a melange of contradictions. Hollway (1984, as cited in Davies, 2000, p. 85) argues that a contradictory subjectivity “is a site of potential change as much as it is a site of reproduction”. Therefore the participants’ subjectivities may hold the potential for critical reflection and reflexive practices which serve to prise open cracks in the ideology of patriarchy (Thompson, 1990); cracks that can be expanded so as to reconfigure relations of domination and throw up possibilities for new stories of embodiment situated in relations of equality.

CONCLUSION

In this research I have attempted to weave together the two theoretical frameworks of the inscribed body and the lived body. Holding together the two sides of this coin has proven a useful way of understanding the complexities and intricacies of embodiment. It has provided a way of working within the dialectical movements of structure and subjectivity. The data shows that patriarchy works through the representations and experiences of feminists’ bodies via discourses and practices of normative femininity, the naturalisation of male sexual dominance, logocentrism and objectification. Consistent with literature and previous research, this paper sheds light on the alienating and contradictory experiences of women under patriarchy. Although, these findings are not generalisable, if patriarchy is shown even to work through critically conscious women, it has implications for those who are less so. However, this research has also revealed that feminist subjectivities are a source for emerging woman-centred counter discourses about women’s bodies. Representations that disrupt patriarchy hold out the possibility for collectively creating and living new

imaginings. This research thus provides important beginnings of a new tapestry which needs to be continued in order to further the feminist project.

NOTES

¹ See Turner (1984) for one of the first works in this area.

² I understand ideology to mean the “ways in which meaning (or signification) serves to sustain relations of domination” (Thompson, 1984, p. 4).

³ See studies by Epstein, Kehily, Mac an Ghail and Redman (2001) as well as by Skelton (2001) for further studies on the discouragement of girls in the sporting sphere.

⁴ I understand patriarchy as an ideology and thus as the ways in which meanings and practices function to maintain relations of male domination over women.

⁵ See for example Motsei (2007) for an exposition of the patriarchal discourses surrounding the 2006 Zuma rape trial.

⁶ I understand race to be a social construct, particularly highlighted by the problematic “mixed race” categorisation.

⁷ All names are pseudonyms, except my own. Participants were given the choice of choosing their own pseudonym.

⁸ See Reay (2001) for an analysis of girls taking up the ‘tomboy’ subject position.

⁹ I acknowledge my own role in this re-presentation. I chose what to include, exclude and how to position it. However as Chadwick (2001) states, there is never the possibility of neutrally re-presenting narratives. This particular re-presentation brings to light how Maggie’s relationship to femininity was mirrored in her experience of her body.

¹⁰ See for example Millstead and Frith (2003).

¹¹ Being is defined as self-evident, permanent and unchanging in opposition to the movement of becoming (Heidegger, 1961).

¹² According to South African Police Services crime information, a woman is raped every 12 minutes and an only an approximated one in 20 to 30 rapes are reported (Britton, 2002).

¹³ *Logos* is based on the Aristotelean law of non-contradiction (Harvey, 1987). This law states that an object cannot simultaneously be p and not-p (Archer, 2000). Hegel (and a trajectory of thought since) proposes an alternative philosophy based on the logic of contradiction (Grosz, 1989).

¹⁴ The comments are consistent with the findings by Millstead and Frith (2003) in which women’s breasts were experienced as commodities for the male gaze.